A Concise Summary of Islam and a Glimpse of Its Most Notable Merits

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Preface

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds. May peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muḥammad, his family, and his companions.

In an age marked by competing worldviews and profound questions about existence, meaning, and morality, the Islamic perspective stands out for its harmony between reason and revelation, intellect and faith, evidence and innate disposition.

Haseen Center is dedicated to confronting intellectual and ideological deviations by nurturing faith and producing educational and research-based materials through modern methods—helping build resilient and tranquil communities grounded in sound knowledge and belief.

Guided by this vision, Haseen Center for Research and Studies in Kuwait has launched this translation project to present select contemporary Arabic works on the proofs and virtues of Islam, as well as critique of atheism and secularism, to English-speaking audiences. The aim is to provide both Muslims and non-Muslims with authentic insights into how Islamic scholarship addresses questions of belief, doubt, and the human quest for meaning.

The translated works range from concise essays by renowned scholars, distinguished for their intellectual depth, to academic studies by specialized researchers, appreciated for their analytical rigor. Together, they reflect the breadth and vitality of contemporary Islamic scholarship—where reasoned argument is harmonized with the guidance of revelation.

The translation team has endeavored to ensure accuracy, clarity, and fidelity to the original texts, while preserving their tone and context, and clarifying concepts that may be unfamiliar to non-Arabic readers.

These works invite fair-minded reflection and sincere dialogue in the pursuit of truth. For in Islam, faith in Allah is both rational and innate, a conviction that fills life with peace and purpose.

This project has been made possible—by the grace of Allah—and through the generous support of the Endowment of Eisa Abdula Abdul Aziz ALothman (may Allah have mercy on him), whose contribution embodies a noble commitment to knowledge and to spreading the light of understanding across the world.

May Allah bless this endeavor, make it fruitful, and guide all seekers of truth to what is right and good.

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Foreword by the Translator

It is with great reverence and gratitude that I present this English translation of a short yet profoundly impactful work authored by one of the foremost scholars of the modern era, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir al-Saʿdī (1889–1956). A leading scholar in the field of Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, and theology, Shaykh al-Saʿdī was renowned for his clarity of thought, depth of scholarship, and eloquence in expressing complex Islamic principles with remarkable simplicity and incredible beauty. His influence extended far beyond his hometown of ʿUnayzah in the region of al-Qaṣīm, and his students—such as Shaykh Ibn ʿUthaymīn—carried his legacy across generations.

The treatise before you, A Concise Summary of Islam and a Glimpse of Its Most Notable Merits, is a radiant distillation of Islam's essence. In a few pages, Shaykh al-Saʿdī captures the grandeur of Islamic theology, the elevation of pure Tawḥīd, and the profound coherence between Islamic law, ethics, and universal truth. The author masterfully presents Islam not as a fragmented faith, but as a divinely revealed system that encompasses belief, practice, character, society, and intellect, anchored in revelation and affirmed by reason.

What makes this work especially relevant today is its confident, rational, and spiritually uplifting tone. It affirms that Islam is the path to individual and societal well-being, and that every truth, every virtue, and every reform aligns with the message of Islam. Shaykh al-Saʿdī's insights into the harmony between revelation and observable reality, his emphasis on justice and mercy, and his grounding in the Qur'an as the ultimate source of light make this work an enduring treasure.

I have sought, in this translation, to faithfully preserve the eloquence, beauty, and clarity of the original Arabic while making it accessible and meaningful for the modern reader. May Allah accept this humble effort, make it a means of benefit and guidance, and reward the noble author for the light he left behind.

And Allah is the source of all success.

Dr. Abdullah Sueidi

Islam is the surrender to Allah through Tawḥīd—affirming His oneness—by believing in His absolute perfection, a perfection beyond which none can be conceived. This belief revolves around the attributes conveyed by the messengers, affirming Allah's names and attributes in a manner befitting His majesty and absolute completeness. It is the firm conviction that He is the Creator, the Provider, the One who manages all created things—both minute and grand, elevated and low. That none brings good but Him, and none repels harm except Him. All blessings come from Allah, whether religious or worldly, and whether they come through a means or without any discernible cause from the servant, for all means are in Allah's hands.

Then the heart becomes filled with reverence for Allah and turns to Him in every matter, loving Him and worshipping Him through what He has legislated on the tongues of His messengers—obeying Him and obeying His messengers, especially Muḥammad ﷺ, whom we are commanded to believe in and follow in entirety—both in general and in detail, in knowledge, belief, and practice.

This is the essence and reality of the religion of Islam. The beliefs and outward and inward acts of worship legislated on the tongue of His Messenger are but a detailed explanation of this foundation. It is the religion of Allah—He accepts no other religion from anyone. As He said: ***"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him"*** *(Āl ʿImrān: 85)*.

This is the very path of all the prophets and messengers and those who followed them until the Day of Judgement. It is what was affirmed by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, who confirmed all that the previous messengers brought, overseeing the earlier scriptures by affirming all truth they contained and rejecting what was added, omitted, or distorted. Then Allah perfected for him the religion, completed His favor upon him and his Ummah, and chose Islam as their way of life.

This is the religion that includes belief in all the messengers and in what they were given by Allah, both in creed and law.

Allah says: ***"Say: We believe in Allah…"*** *(al-Baqarah: 136)* until the end of the verse. As you see, it encompasses belief in every messenger sent by Allah, in every book He revealed, and in every truth that was or will be until the Hour is established. There remains no true religion that is not included and encompassed within it.

Among its proofs is that it commands belief in every truth, sincerity, righteousness, justice, soundness, goodness, reform, guidance, uprightness, excellence, and noble character, and it forbids all that opposes this. Every virtue practiced by past and present nations, Islam has called to, clarified in the best and clearest of expressions, and made its path accessible. Every evil and vile thing, past and present, Islam has warned against, cautioned people against, and directed people away from.

Among its greatest virtues is that it is founded upon pure Tawḥīd and sincere devotion, both in belief, speech, and action. One of the fruits of this Tawḥīd is sincerity in all outward and inward deeds for the sake of Allah, both in His rights and in the rights of His creation. It is complete reliance on Allah for attaining benefits and warding off harm, for the person of Tawḥīd knows that Allah alone controls benefit and harm, giving and withholding, and that all creation is far too weak and incapable to oppose the will and decree of Allah.

From the effects of this Tawḥīd is the rejection of shirk and excess toward created beings—not raising them above the station in which Allah placed them, nor attributing to them any of the unique qualities of lordship or divinity—for the person of Tawḥīd knows that none is worthy of worship in truth. Still, Allah, and that shirk is the gravest injustice and the vilest of evils.

Also among the virtues of this religion are the beautiful commands that follow from this lofty foundation—commands that ensure the rectification of religion, worldly affairs, and all circumstances—such as the command to pray, to give Zakāh and Ṣadaqah, to spend in all forms of charitable works, to fast, perform Ḥajj and ʿUmrah, and to strive in Jihād against those who oppose the truth and prevent the call to the true religion. It also commands every good and forbids every evil.

And righteousness toward one's parents, maintaining ties with kin, kindness to servants, neighbors, companions, and all of humanity, through sharing knowledge, wealth, and influence. It includes the pursuit of various beneficial sciences, pardoning people, responding to invitations, visiting the sick, and accompanying funeral processions.

Also, spreading peace and returning greetings with the same or something better, saying "yarḥamuka Allāh" to one who sneezes and responding when one says it, loving Allah, fearing Him, hoping in Him, turning to Him in every trial, rushing to Him in all critical matters, and placing trust in Him.

It includes adopting beneficial means and exercising patience—patience in obeying Allah, patience in refraining from disobedience, and patience in enduring painful decrees—for His sake. It includes being grateful to Allah for His blessings, showing gratitude to those among His creation who do good to you, and loving what Allah and His Messenger love.

It calls to modesty, chastity from all vile acts, and justice in rulings, in all transactions, and all rights. It calls to fulfilling agreements appropriately, honoring contracts, covenants, and trusts of every kind, speaking the truth, abandoning anger, malice, and envy. It encourages humility, avoiding arrogance toward the truth or people, abandoning self-admiration and vanity, and restraining the soul from following its whims.

It includes being content with Allah as one's Lord, with Islam as one's religion, and with Muḥammad as one's Prophet. It encourages having good expectations of Allah, frequently remembering Him day and night, and contemplating what Allah has commanded His servants

to contemplate—both the heard signs (revelation) and the observed signs (creation)—and deducing from these signs their implications, then acting upon them.

It includes reviving every good Sunnah and warning against its opposite, repenting from all sins, freeing oneself from injustices, supporting the oppressed, and restraining oppressors, along with many other outward and inward legislations. Merely grasping these with a sound intellect compels one to affirm, with certainty and no doubt, that the religion containing them is the true religion. Anything that contradicts it is false. It is a religion suitable for every time and place. No harm or deficiency has ever entered into people's religion or worldly life—nor will it—except through neglecting this religion, which guarantees, with firm assurance, that whoever adheres to it will find their affairs upright and their conditions reformed.

It is the religion that rectifies the intellect, the heart, the character, and one's conduct. It cultivates a beneficial upbringing and protects against collapse, ruin, and misery; reality is the greatest witness to this.

There has not been any form of rectitude that entered any nation except that its origin and source was this upright religion. And if you want to gauge its worth, weigh it with the correct scale and sound reason against every other religion that differs from it—you will find that there is no comparison between them at all.

It is enough to know that Islam comprises both informative truths and legal rulings, and not a single authentic report within it contradicts reason or reality. Whoever claims otherwise, their claim will be exposed as false upon the slightest reflection. Rather, its reports are of two kinds: one that reason affirms as true and in harmony with reality, and another whose details the intellect cannot grasp, leaving it bewildered without possessing any basis to refute or undermine it.

Moreover, in these latter times, Allah—the Exalted—has manifested in the universe and through astonishing scientific advancements and inventions, some of the greatest signs that affirm the unseen matters Allah and His Messenger have informed of. The disbelieving atheists once rejected such matters, deeming them implausible based on human limitations. They denied resurrection after becoming dust and decayed bones.

They deemed it inconceivable that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ could be taken by night from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā in a single night. They rejected the idea that the people of Paradise and Hell could speak to each other across such great distances. They rejected many matters of the unseen, relying solely on their corrupted reasoning.

Yet, atheists have always rejected and denied anything they have not witnessed. So, Allah has shown them, in these very times, that which invalidates their denials, revealing to them through what they have seen in the horizons and in their own selves the falsity of their objections.

Thus, if the created being—imperfect in every way, weak in knowledge, will, power, and action—has been taught by Allah what he once knew not, from the sciences of nature and matter, until people became able to fly through the air, dive into the depths of the seas, and communicate from the eastern to the western ends of the earth, and many other modern inventions—then what of the One who is capable of all things?

The One to whom the elements of the heavens and the earth submit, whose will prevails over all created beings, whose knowledge encompasses everything, and who has shown definitive proofs and clear evidence for the truth of what He and His messengers have conveyed—from rational, transmitted, instinctual, and universal signs?

So, woe to the deniers. ***"Woe to every sinful liar who hears the verses of Allah recited to him yet persists arrogantly as if he had not heard them—so give him tidings of a painful punishment."*** *(al-Jāthiyah: 7–8)*

Likewise, all of the prescribed laws, commands, and prohibitions conform perfectly to the sound balance and just measure. They contain commands for all that is beneficial and good, and prohibitions against all that is harmful and evil. Never did it command something of which the intellect would say: "If only it had been forbidden," nor did it forbid something about which the intellect would say: "If only it had been commanded." Nor has it informed of anything contrary to observable or rational reality.

There is no sound knowledge found among any nation except that Islam has called to it, guided toward it, and urged creation to pursue its path. And there is no righteous and beneficial deed except that Islam has commanded and encouraged it. The more that individuals or communities establish it, the more they rise in degree and ascend in the levels of perfection.

Indeed, the possessors of sound intellects have submitted to the guidance, legislation, and complete rectification offered by Islam. As for its enemies, they have attempted to criticize certain rulings out of intense enmity, desire, and blind partisanship—but clear evidence has invalidated their objections.

It has been proven that Islamic legislation—unrestricted and without exception—follows the straight path in both fundamentals and details. Every matter whose benefit is pure, or whose benefit outweighs its harm, has been commanded. And every matter whose harm is pure, or whose harm outweighs its benefit, has been prohibited.

Apply this principle to acts of worship, transactions, criminal justice, and beyond—you will find them all bearing witness to this principle, affirmed by both revelation and reason.

Among the beauties of this religion is what it commands concerning the fulfillment of rights—to family, children, and servants; the mutual rights between rulers and the ruled—all of which are in complete harmony with justice, rectitude, and reform. We have pointed to some of this wisdom in our book al-Suʾāl waʾl-Jawāb.

Likewise, the laws of inheritance, with their precise and beautiful details, and the broad rulings concerning financial transactions between people, all are founded upon justice, benefit, and a well-ordered system that secures the welfare of both this world and the next.

Also among its merits is the way it prescribes penal laws for various crimes, with punishments varying in form and severity according to the crime committed, resulting in the most complete and just form of deterrence and prevention.

One of the most noble aspects of this religion is that it has permitted every pure thing—whether in food, drink, clothing, marriage, speech, or action—and prohibited every impure thing among them. There is no forbidden path that one might imagine to be necessary or driven by need, except that the lawful alternative is more than sufficient and ample, while also containing real benefit and goodness.

In summary, Allah sent Muḥammad ﷺ with guidance and the religion of truth. Every beneficial knowledge and every righteous deed—Islam has called to it and brought it.

This becomes evident in his noble character and in the character of his Ummah, those who uphold his religion. In the diversity of his beautiful manners, and in the noble character of his followers who adhered to his teachings in knowledge and action; in their scholarship, their morals, their refined upbringing, and the ways they surpassed both earlier and later generations—there is the most unmistakable evidence and proof of the perfection of their religion, which enabled them to reach what they attained.

And any deficiency that befell the Muslims occurred only due to their neglect of some parts of their religion. Wherever their adherence to the religion was complete, all their affairs were upright. And wherever their adherence weakened, deficiency appeared accordingly. This is definitive proof that all rectification revolves around the religion of Islam—its presence brings goodness, and its absence brings loss.

The foundation, the source, the structure, and the perfection of all rectification lie in adhering to the religion of Islam, which is the straight path and the clear truth. Every other religion that contradicts it is a source of evil, corruption, and the ruination of beliefs, morals, deeds, religion, and worldly life. Sufficient for us is Allah, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

And if Islam had no merit other than this magnificent Qur'an—its soul, its foundation, and its wellspring—that alone would suffice as its highest honor, virtue, and elevation.

This Qur'an contains what no other book in the history of the world has ever contained, since the day Allah brought the world into being: it encompasses every beneficial knowledge, every sound piece of understanding, truthful reports, noble beliefs, beautiful rulings, virtuous character, and full rectification of both religious and worldly affairs.

It is a book of the highest eloquence, truthful reports of the unseen that match reality, affirmation of every truth, and refutation of every falsehood.

It is the Book that, if all nations were to place it before them and follow it, would lead them to every happiness and success, and protect them from every collapse and misery. This is not a mere claim or exaggeration—it is the least that can be said about the Qur'an. Anyone with the slightest understanding and fairness would affirm this without hesitation, for it contains every form of miracle—its verses are clear signs, and its proofs radiant—through its wording, its beauty, its eloquence, and its wondrous style, which no other speech can rival.

It also contains reports of the unseen that came to pass precisely as foretold—during the Prophet's lifetime and after—and these continue to unfold with the passage of time. It presents meanings in harmony and unity without contradiction. Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have found in it much inconsistency.

It contains lofty knowledge in the domains of Sharīʿah, legislation, and the universe. It has rendered all creation incapable of opposing it, contradicting it, or presenting anything contrary to what it has informed, despite a comprehensive challenge issued to the first and the last of mankind. Neither its words nor its meanings contradict one another.

It affirms matters that were previously unknown to people—both scientific and historical—at the time of revelation, as confirmed by the scholars of this Ummah in later times. Thus, it stands as the greatest proof and testimony to the prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ, and that the religion he drew from it is truly the religion of Allah, the one He legislated for His servants and made the path to happiness in this world and the next. And success is by Allah.

This was stated and written by the one utterly in need of Allah in every respect: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir ibn Saʿdī—may Allah forgive him, his parents, and the Muslims. May blessings and peace be upon Muḥammad, his family, and his Companions.

Copied from the handwriting of the author by the one in need of his Lord: Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Āl Bassām, on the 3rd of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 1412 AH.

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